

**MINUTES**  
**SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**BJ's Restaurant**  
**990 N. Center Street**  
**Gaylord, Michigan**  
**June 20, 2006**

**Chairman Manson** called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 10:33 a.m., Tuesday, June 20, 2006, in Gaylord, Michigan.

**Members Present:**

Bill Manson, Chair, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids  
James Duke, Region I, MSA, Munising  
Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac  
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins  
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville  
Orv Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington  
David Thomas, Trail Sponsors, Marquette

**Ex-Officio Members Present:**

Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest  
Carol Boll, Huron-Manistee National Forest

**Staff Present:**

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing  
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Manager, FMFM, Lansing  
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing  
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing  
Christie Pollock, Grants Management, Lansing  
Don Klingler, FMFM, Gaylord  
Loretta Cwalinski, FMFM, Gaylord

**Mr. Manson** welcomed everyone. The Snowmobile Advisory Committee, DNR staff and the audience introduced themselves.

**Mr. Manson** introduced Mr. Dave Thomas, the newest Committee member. He is a member of the Hiawathaland Snowmobile Club and represents trail sponsors.

**Mr. Thomas** said he is originally from Ohio and is a semi-retired CPA residing in Marquette. He has been snowmobiling for more than 20 years. He is also Vice President and founding member of Marquette Country Recreational Trails Inc., and a member of the Michigan Upper Peninsula Snowmobile Association.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the April 18, 2006 Snowmobile Advisory Committee Meeting was acknowledged. **Motion was made by Mr. Lucas to adopt the minutes of the April 18, 2006 meeting, seconded by Mr. Nelson. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

## **AGENDA**

The following items were added to the agenda: 1) Military Bridge Update; 2) Sign Replacement Update; 3) Snowmobile Road Crossing Repair Plan; 4) Final Reimbursement Deadline; 5) MDOT Rail Road Corridor Viaduct Road to Mesick Update and; 6) Snowmobile Economic Study.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Law Enforcement Subcommittee** -- **Mr. Murray** read a letter he received from Ms. Maureen Houghton, in response to issues he raised at the last meeting regarding the timing of snowmobile law enforcement grants. It is the Department of Natural Resource's (Department) intent to issue grants in late September for an October 1 start date, however last year the agreements were not mailed until late November because Grants Management was understaffed by three positions. Grants Management is now fully staffed and they do not anticipate late issuance of grant agreements next season. Discussion ensued regarding staffing and the snowmobile law enforcement grant program.

**Finance Subcommittee** – **Mr. Olson** reported the Finance Subcommittee met in April. Several funding topics were discussed and he is still waiting for answers from the Department so the Subcommittee can complete their budget projections.

**Mr. Radabaugh** advised that not all requested information is available at this time and won't be available until all of the final reimbursement requests are received from the clubs and the cost analysis is completed. Staff is currently working with the budget office to develop funding scenarios based on program need. A meeting with the Finance Subcommittee will be scheduled.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Military Bridge** – **Mr. Manson** noted the importance of the Military Bridge project and asked for a status report.

**Mr. Kubisiak** said the club needs to submit a new trail proposal. **Mr. Manson** said he thought one was submitted some time ago and he would like to see this project move forward. **Mr. Charles** said he told the club they need to resubmit the proposal and they are working with Mr. Ron Yesney.

**Mr. Manson** asked about Mr. Todd Neiss's bridge issues in the Cadillac area. **Mr. Kubisiak** reported engineering reviews are in process. **Mr. Lucas** expressed concerns about two bridges and noted the groomer operators don't want to drive over them due to safety concerns. **Mr. Kubisiak** said if the engineers determine the bridges to be unsafe, the groomers will not be allowed on them. Discussion ensued about the engineering review process and the need for good communications between the engineers, field contacts and the clubs.

**Sign Replacement Update** – **Mr. Manson** requested an update and asked if any of the sponsors were reimbursed for expenses related to replacing defective signs last season.

**Mr. Kennedy** reported that twelve clubs were reimbursed by the sign vendor based on documented expenses. He noted a new multi-year sign contract is currently out to bid, and he anticipates having a new contract in place in time for next season. Discussion ensued about State contracting and procurement requirements.

**Snowmobile Road Crossing Repair Plan** -- **Mr. Manson** reported he wrote a letter to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) on behalf of the Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), opposing the use of snowmobile funds for road repairs. He said if there was a change to the State gasoline tax, funding assistance to MDOT for road repairs could be possible, but as it stands now MSA does not support use of snowmobile funds for road repairs. Discussion ensued.

**Motion by Mr. Lucas seconded by Mr. Murray that the Snowmobile Advisory Committee opposes the use of snowmobile funds for road repairs. Motion unanimously carried.**

The Department will send a letter to MDOT to officially notify them of the Committee's position.

**Reimbursement Deadline** – **Mr. Manson** requested an update on the number of sponsors that have not submitted their final reimbursement requests.

**Ms. Bayus** reported final reimbursement requests were due April 30<sup>th</sup> and currently 10 clubs have not submitted their final payment requests, or are missing payment documentation. She read off the names of the clubs. The Department sent a reminder letter to the sponsors requesting all final payment and documentation by June 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Mr. Lucas** and **Mr. Murray** reported they contacted several sponsors to see why they have not sent in their final reimbursement requests. Primary problem areas seem to involve documentation for insurance payments and private land leases. It was noted that cashiers checks or money orders are acceptable in lieu of cancelled checks to document private land lease payments.

**Mr. Manson** said V & V's insurance policy expires on April 15<sup>th</sup> and thought that may be part of the problem with the clubs providing documentation for insurance payments. Discussion ensued regarding insurance payments. Mr. Manson will follow-up with V & V to see if there is a more logical term date to accommodate grant program payment documentation requirements. He requested insurance be placed on the next agenda.

**NEW BUSINESS** – None

## **STAFF REPORTS**

**Recreation Specialist Reports** -- were distributed with the agenda. **Mr. Duke** said Mr. Moore's report had an error. The Shingleton report should read H15 instead of 415. He said the re-route is about a ¼ mile long and is being done because the road was recently resurfaced, and snowmobiles have damaged the road.

**Mr. Duke** also reported working with the Schoolcraft Snowmobile Association in the Boot Lake area, to designate a three mile segment of a private trail to provide access to fuel and a bed and breakfast. He noted the Association is willing to provide a trailhead.

**MDOT Railroad Corridor Viaduct Road to Mesick Update** – **Mr. Radabaugh** distributed a chronology of events related to the MDOT railroad corridor near Mesick. Long-term lease negotiations are proceeding between the Department and MDOT. The Department requested MDOT consider the value of future corridor improvements in determining the final cost conditions of the lease. This request is currently under review by MDOT and the Department is awaiting a response. Discussion ensued. The club has a renewable short-term lease with MDOT, on a portion of this corridor currently.

**Mr. Radabaugh** reported the county removed the Viaduct Road Bridge. The bridge is jointly owned by the Department and MDOT. The agencies will be sending the county a letter requesting them to rebuild the bridge.

**Snowmobile Economic Study** – **Mr. Radabaugh** distributed draft objectives for a snowmobile economic study. He requested the committee provide him with their comments in the next couple of weeks. He reported Dr. Chuck Nelson, from Michigan State University, is on sabbatical and working with the Department. This will be one of his projects.

**Gaylord to Cheboygan Trail** – **Mr. Manson** reported the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board unanimously passed a resolution at their last meeting to lift the motorized restrictions on the Mulett Lake stretch. **Mr. Radabaugh** added the Director's Order will need to be modified and a public hearing will be scheduled later this summer to take public comment.

**White Pine Trail State Park** – **Mr. Manson** reported the Governor recently signed a law renaming the White Pine Trail State Park to the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail. The Meijer Foundation has donated a gift of \$1 million toward trail improvements that will be matched with federal funds. Discussion ensued about trail paving and impacts associated with snowmobiling.

**Pre-season Meetings** -- **Mr. Kennedy** reported pre-season meetings have been scheduled. The sponsors and Committee will be notified.

**US Forest Report** -- **Mr. Charles** reported an engineering firm has been selected to do an engineering feasibility study for a bridge over the Whitefish River in the Hiawatha National Forest. He read a note from Ms. Anne Okonek thanking the Department and the UP Snofliers for their help on this project.

**Ms. Boll** was requested to facilitate a meeting with Mr. Lucas and Forest Service staff regarding the 56<sup>th</sup> Street re-route.

## **PUBLIC APPEARANCE**

**Mr. Don Kauppi, Keweenaw Trails Inc.** asked if the Department is getting out of the grooming business.

**Mr. Radabaugh** advised the Department is working on a phase-out plan and anticipates the Department will not be grooming after 2008. Discussion ensued about Department owned grooming equipment. State surplus equipment including groomers must go to public auction. More information is available at the Department of Management and Budget website at [www.michigan.gov/dmb](http://www.michigan.gov/dmb).

**Mr. John Houk, NE MI Snowmobile Council** – read a letter from **Mr. Bill Taylor** in his absence. He wants to use steel posts for “Stop” and “Stop Ahead” signs. He believes they are safer and more vandal resistant.

**Mr. Houk** believes there is a need for a warning sign in the event that a groomer breaks down on the trail. He suggested a “Disabled Groomer Ahead” sign. He asked when the grant handbook would be available. He had questions about the equipment replacement program and timeline.

**Mr. Manson** said there is no date yet but he’s begun initial conversations with the manufacturers. He suggested a need to identify standard models and features so that information could be provided to the manufacturers and they can establish pricing. He

suggested this be a task for the workgroup. The Department will schedule a workgroup meeting to further define the equipment program.

**Mr. William Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council** – asked about liability insurance from V&V and how would a sponsor know when their information has gone to the Department.

**Mr. Manson** said he hopes to have an answer for the September meeting.

**Mr. Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Club**, expressed concerns about signs not getting delivered to the clubs until late next season. He said some of the signs faces can get worn down while transporting them in the groomer because they rub together.

**Mr. Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Association** wanted to make sure the Department provides some flexibility with regard to trail signing inspections next season, if the signs arrive late. The Department will take that into consideration.

**Mr. Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association** asked about the grant forms and when they will be available on-line.

**Ms. Bayus** advised the forms are already on-line and they are fillable. The application due date has been moved back to July 31, 2006. She also noted that documentation of non-profit certification will no longer need to be submitted by the clubs at the time of application, but they need to make sure their certification is up to date.

**Mr. Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers** said he received a list of recycling companies from Ada Takas that may accept old trail signs. He feels the black sign backing is too difficult to see at night and warp in the hot sun. He also reported 911 emergency signs are being stolen. He asked questions about the groomer replacement program and the Gaylord to Cheboygan Trail.

**Mr. Bud Longroy, West Branch** asked questions about Mr. Manson's meeting with groomer manufacturers.

**Mr. Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** asked about standard options for the groomers. **Mr. Manson** said all the options that really are necessary will be included.

**Mr. Carroll** suggested the recommended blue and white directional arrows be used in conjunction with the blue food, gas or lodging signs.

**Mr. Don Reed, MSA Vice President** suggested using the blue service signs over the orange arrow sign.

**Mr. Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association** asked about funding for trail permits and how many were sold last year.

**Mr. Manson** said MSA and the Department is in the process of reconciling last year's trail permit sales and won't know final figures until that process is complete. He noted permit sales were down from previous years.

**Mr. Bradley Potter, Western Michigan Snowmobile Council** had insurance questions reference damage done to other properties, and said that he understands that the whole club is responsible for liability. **Mr. Manson** said Mr. Cottle will explain. **Mr. Cottle** explained that there is some research being done on property damage liability. **Mr. Manson** added there needs to be a non-exposure addition to protect the clubs. Discussion continued. If anyone has concerns or further questions e-mail Mr. Cottle.

**Mr. John Houk, NE MI Council and PIST** asked if there is information on where the money is being divided and spent on which projects, on a website? **Mr. Manson** said no, not yet, but MSA could probably get that information out.

**Ms. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council** said that she has made fleece lined vinyl protective bags, so the signs wouldn't rub together during transport.

**Mr. Houk** asked how much money is spent on liability insurance. **Ms. Bayus** said approximately \$100,000 a year.

**Mr. Cottle** believes property damage needs to be covered and suggested a self-insurance type pool. Each club would put in \$500 to create a pool of funds to be used if a club is sued for damages.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 26, 2006 at 10:30 a.m., BJ's Restaurant & Catering, 990 North Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan.

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

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### **Public Present:**

Don Reed, Michigan Snowmobile Assoc	Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club	Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Assoc.
Kaye Houk, Presque Isle Snow Trials (P.I.)	Rodney Maltman, P.I. Snow Trails
Martin Cottle, Soo Snow Assoc, EUP Snow Council	John Houk, P.I. & NE MI Council Larry Marzcan, Alpena Snow Club
David Becker, St. Helen Snow Packers	LaVerne Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snow Packers	
Al Persondek, R.H.T.C.	George Zajac, Trailriders – Baldwin
Jim Dingman, Trailriders – Baldwin	Mark Sellner, W MI Snow Council
Bradley Porter, W MI Snow Council	William R. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council
Mary A. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trls Cncl	
Debra Manson, MI Snowmobile Assoc.	Don Kauppi, Keweenaw Trail Inc.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT  
JUNE 20, 2006

**FROM RON YESNEY - WUP RECREATION SPECIALIST**

Working on the Military Bridge project over the Ontonagon River and will be meeting with the USFS and the Sno Valley Riders Snowmobile Club in the near future.

The Silver River Bridge Project Proposal (Baraga County) has been submitted to Lansing for review.

Field review and recommendations for the Buck Lake Trail reroute north of Watersmeet has been completed. We are waiting for approval from USFS on this proposal. This is an effort to reroute and reconnect Watersmeet with Bruce Crossing.

**FROM DAN MOORE - EUP RECREATION SPECIALIST**

Working with Shingleton staff to find a trail re-route between Shingleton and the Bear Trap Junction. Alger County Road Commission is closing County Road H-15 to snowmobiles and if we don't get this re-route, we will have a major break in the Northern Cross UP route.

Also working on trail proposal for a re-route of the Manistique-M-77 trail. If approved, this will make this trail a much more direct route to the east. Since this is the Southern Cross UP route, this re-route will be a plus for the system.

**FROM TODD NEISS - WLP RECREATION SPECIALIST**

Morris Creek Bridge was inspected in 2005 and determined to be safe for the 2006 season. Improvements to this structure identified in the consulting engineer's report may be funded from initial assessment grant. Decision is at Lansing DNR and DMB. (6/1/06)

The following WLP bridges have been previously identified as needing an engineering assessment: West Twin Creek Bridge, Manistee River Bridge, Chase Creek Bridge, Flower Creek Bridge, Chase Creek Bridge- Tribe#1 and 2, Townline Creek Bridge, Fur Farm Bridge, Crystal Mtn Spur Bridge.

DNR staff is working with the Grand Traverse Conservation District, Paradise Township, Grand Traverse County Snowmobile Association, Michigan Trail Riders Association, and Grand Traverse Rotary to acquire or lease property to reroute the existing trail, and therefore greatly improve safety issues in this corridor. Currently portions of the snowmobile/horse trail are located on the shoulder of County Highway 611, which according the local road commission receives an average of 10,000 vehicles per day

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, the DNR met with interested citizens of Frankfort to discuss options for a spur trail from/to their city to tie in with existing designated snowmobile trail in the area. Traverse City Unit Mgr. and I will review their initial proposal, and respond accordingly (6/2/06).

**FROM ROBIN PEARSON - ELP RECREATION SPECIALIST**

Re-route and culvert on Jordan Valley trail near corner of M-66 and Old State Road Approved.  
Re-route of trail #782 – Approval pending receipt of permission from RR.  
Michigan Limestone Quarry re-route – Meeting occurred between AG, MLP & OLAF to establish next steps. Future meetings to be scheduled.

Director's Orders Status:

Devil's Lake Seasonal Road Closure – In progress

Hawks to Alpena, Paxton Spur and Rogers City Spur – In progress